

FIRST MSC APIA CONSULTATION ON JUSTICE AND PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Held at Communication Foundation for Asia
Manila, Philippines
May 1- 9, 1997

STATEMENT

We, participants to the First MSC APIA Justice and Peace Consultation, gathered together at the Communication Foundation for Asia, Manila, Philippines on May 1 - 9, 1997, express our heartfelt gratitude to the Superiors of the MSC APIA Region and to the MSC General Administration for calling us together for this consultation on our MSC Charism and Mission for Justice and Peace. With varying degrees of awareness and experience of the work for Justice and Peace, we have come with the desire to learn more and to be more deeply involved in this important dimension of our MSC Charisma.

Our Journey.

We have travelled a long way across Asia, the Pacific Islands and Australia.

And then, we began with some exposure experience by marching with the workers on the streets of Manila on Workers' Day (May 1) and by listening to their stories of oppression and struggles for a better life in the picket line in a Nestle factory and in a workers' development and educational institute in Angeles City, Pampanga. We have lived in the homes of the peasant-farmers and some indigenous Filipinos and felt the injustice and exploitation committed against them and their land in Lupao, Nueva Ecija. Visiting the site of the peasant massacre was a moving experience for all of us.

These exposure experiences led us on a journey of discovery as we began to raise questions as to what it means to be Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in our world today. The experiences of great poverty and serious injustice made us ask: "What kind of a world do we live in today?" They also led us to question the comfort and affluence of our present life style.

The exposure experiences touched us deeply and made the invisible forces of injustice become visible in the faces of the people we met-men and women, peasants, workers, indigenous people, the young and the children. As we listened to the voices of all these people, we asked ourselves: "Who is listening?"

Then we returned to Manila. There we listened to talks and reflections on our MSC Charism and Mission, the biblical concept of Justice and Peace and the place of the prophets in the life of God's people and in our life as religious. We shared our perceptions on our respective country situations and our analysis of the present Asian and global realities. And we began to put together the cornerstones for an MSC APIA Solidarity for Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation.

Our Discovery.

We have seen the richness of our diversity and uniqueness. We have discovered too our common lot of poverty and injustice in the midst of so much human potential and creativity on the one hand, and material wealth and prosperity on the other. Inspired by our founder, Fr. Jules Chevalier, analyzing the causes of this scandal of injustice in our region and in the world at large, humbled by the struggles of the poor of our region, and contemplating on the Heart of Jesus, we are challenged, as religious, to live the Church's prophetic heritage and to share a common vision and mission for Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation.

Now we know of the deep conviction of Fr. Jules Chevalier regarding a new world emerging from the pierced Heart of Jesus, a world watered by Justice and Peace. Now we know of the great prophetic heritage of religious life that is to be the sign, the parable and miracle?no matter how provisional?of Christ's prophetic ministry in our time for the event of God's Reign. Now we know that the present international relations and social arrangements which globalization has called the new order only enrich the very few and impoverish the majority, deprive nations and the poor of their lands and patrimony, while teaching them the ways of violence and unpeace, especially in our APIA Region. And having witnessed the rising of the poor to meet the life-threatening assaults of globalization against humanity and Mother Nature, we are challenged to deepen our ties with the people of the land through immersion and exposure experiences, to strengthen our bonds of solidarity with the poor and with one another, and to make the conscientization for Justice and Peace an essential and integral dimension in our life, mission and formation.

With Fr. Jules Chevalier, we believe that Justice and Peace is the alternative vision of life for all, a communion with God, with one another and with all of creation. It describes the quality of life in the Reign of God, the coming of a new heaven and a new earth. It is in this sense that we have learned to believe that our human participation in the saving works of God in our time, and our compassion for the world of today must be a conscious choice, a preferential option for the poor and an engagement in liberating and transforming action.

Some may think that, because issues of justice can be conflictual, involve one in politics and stir feelings of anger, it is not appropriate for MSCs. However justice is not alien to our MSC charism. Properly understood, justice is that aspect of love which urges us to fight for the rights and dignity of all our brothers and sisters in the family of God. It is grounded in the scriptures and in the actions of Jesus himself. The call to work for justice and to be concerned for the poor is very much part of the prophetic charism shared by all religious in the Church today, and more specifically, by us Missionaries of the Sacred Heart as we contemplate on the compassionate Heart of Jesus.

Our Stand.

Consequently, we reject the schemes of globalization as imposed by the powerful nationstates and monopolistic multinational and transnational conglomerates for it makes a god out of the neo-liberal market. We also refuse to collaborate with the system which globalization has produced and intends to reproduce.

We lament the fact that, although a number of our MSC Provinces have been outstanding in their option for the poor and their concern for justice, other Provinces have been slow to move into this aspect of our mission with energy and purpose. We would like to affirm the call already made by those who attended the Cor Novum Justice and Peace course in 1996 that: "Central to our MSC Charism as we move toward the 3rd Millennium must be our commitment to a new world order of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation."

Furthermore, we support the full implementation of the APIA Superiors' Statement on Contextualization, Inculturation and Justice and Peace (Fiji, August 1996).

We are particularly concerned that we, the Provinces and Regions of the APIA region, must from now on make a concerted effort to be at the forefront of the struggle for justice and concern for the poor. The situation facing our APIA region calls for serious socioeconomic analysis and serious prophetic action. The mission of justice and peace and the option for the poor must be a constitutive dimension of our formation, our life, and our ministries.

Our Call.

To this end we call on

1. our Provincials and Superiors

- (a) to keep this vision before the eyes of all our members;
- (b) to set up Justice and Peace desks in their areas;
- (c) to arrange for APIA consultations on J&P every 3 years;
- (d) to provide support for those engaged in special J&P ministries;
- (e) to continue to explore some forms of MSC APIA cooperation and solidarity work for Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation.

2. our Formators

- (a) to inspire our young MSCs with a Christ-like love for the poor that involves the concern for justice;
- (b) to involve our young MSCs in experiences which expose them to poverty and injustice;
- (c) to make sure that our MSC students have Courses in such as sociology, social analysis and basic economics so that they can understand the situation in which they live and are empowered to do contextual theology.
- (d) to incorporate Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation concerns and issues in the APIA Spirituality and Formation Seminars and other APIA activities.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved, now and forever!

Signed:

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